

SPEAKERS OF THE PAST.

Pan-Pictures of the Men Who Have Used the Gavel.

There have been thirty-one Speakers for fifty-one Congresses, says a writer in the New York Press.

Next to the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives has, perhaps, more power than any other officer of the Government. Hence the office is sought after as a great prize. Yet it is doubtful if any of the present generation can recall the names of the Speakers even thirty years ago. Those whose names are conspicuous, even now, have generally won distinction in other departments. For example, Blaine is now known as Senator and Cabinet officer more than as Speaker. But the Speakership is a stepping stone to more conspicuous, but not to more influential posts. Yet the fact remains that only one Speaker of the House has ever reached the Presidency, and even this Speaker was so little known that when he was nominated for the Presidency he was met with the campaign cry, "Who is James K. Polk?" On the other hand, the two most marked men who have been Speakers—Henry Clay and James G. Blaine—were unsuccessful candidates for the Presidency.

The contest now on for the Speakership in the next House recalls the States and sections that have been previously represented. The honors are exactly even. When Tom Reed retired from the Speakership last March the South and North had held that office for fifty-one years each. Kentucky heads the list with 22 years; next Virginia 13 years; Pennsylvania, 11; Massachusetts, 10; Indiana, 9; Maine, 8; North Carolina and New Jersey, each 6; Tennessee 5; New York and South Carolina, 3 each; Connecticut, Georgia and Ohio, 2 years each. The odd numbers here are due to death or resignation and elections to fill vacancies. Only one Speaker has died in office, and only two have resigned, Henry Clay and Andrew Stevenson of Virginia.

Frederick A. C. Muhlenberg, of Pennsylvania, was Speaker of First Congress, which met 1789. He was the son of one of the founders of the American Lutheran Church. The Speaker had himself been a Lutheran clergyman, but he left the ministry in 1779 and entered politics. He was a member of the Continental Congress. He served during the first four Congresses, being Speaker of the First and Third. He was only 39 years of age at the time of the first election.

Jonathan Trumbull, of Connecticut, an old Revolutionary War officer, was the second Speaker. He served in the First, Second and Third Congresses, and was afterward United States Senator, and then Governor of Connecticut eleven terms and died in office in 1809. Trumbull and Muhlenberg were both Federalists.

The Speaker of the Fourth and Fifth Congress was Jonathan Dayton, of New Jersey. He also had been an officer during the Revolution and afterward became a United States Senator.

Theodore Sedgwick, of Massachusetts presided over the Sixth Congress, 1779-1801. He also had a soldier record, had been a member of the Continental Congress and a Judge of the Superior Court of Massachusetts. The South first secured the Speakership with the Seventh Congress in the person of Nathaniel Macon, of North Carolina. Macon was re-elected Speaker in the two following Congresses. Altogether he served in the House and the Senate thirty-seven years. His popularity was so great in his State that he was usually chosen without opposition, until, in 1829, he declined to be renominated. He was perhaps the most distinguished man ever sent to Washington from North Carolina, and was the first distinctive and pronounced Democrat who held the Speakership.

The Tenth and Eleventh Congresses elected Joseph Varnum, of Massachusetts. He had been a General in the Revolution and had served twelve years in the Senate.

Then came Henry Clay with the Twelfth Congress, the most conspicuous Speaker of them all, and the one who held the office for the greatest length of time. He was first chosen in 1811, and was elected for five terms successively, and, after two years, for another term. During his service he resigned twice; first to be one of the Commissioners to make peace with England; second, in 1820, on account of his private affairs. He was again elected in 1823, during which term he ran first for the Presidency, when he was defeated by Andrew Jackson.

He made other attempts to become President in 1832 and 1844, only to be each time defeated. Clay was in public life forty-six years after first entering Congress, part of the time a Senator and part of the time as Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams.

When Mr. Clay first resigned the Speakership he was succeeded by Langdon Cheves, of South Carolina, and his unexpired term in the Sixteenth Congress was filled by John W. Taylor, of New York.

Philip P. Barbour, of Virginia, was the Speaker of the Seventeenth Congress, 1821-1823.

John M. Taylor, of New York, was Speaker of the Sixteenth Congress, succeeding Mr. Clay.

The Twentieth, Twenty-first, Twenty-second, and part of the Twenty-third Congresses were presided over by Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia. Mr. Stevenson resigned to become Minister to England. John Bell, of Tennessee, succeeded him as Speaker. Like Clay, Bell served in both branches of Congress, was a member of the Cabinet (Secretary of War under Harrison) and was an unsuccessful candidate for the Presidency.

James K. Polk, of Tennessee, was the thirteenth Speaker, presiding over the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Congresses. This Speaker, with the unlucky "thirteen" against him, was the only one who became president. Mr. Polk was also an exception in this—he declined during his term of office renomination for the Presidency.

The career of R. M. T. Hunter, of Virginia, the next Speaker of the House (1839-1841), was unlucky. While he was Speaker his name was often mentioned in connection with the Presidency. As soon as it became certain that the Southern States would secede, Hunter was mentioned as the most suitable leader for the new Confederacy. Jeff Davis, however secured the unhappy prize, and Hunter had to content himself with a Cabinet position under Davis. After the war he was pushed aside by younger and more active men, and he became so much a part of a dead question that when he was appointed to a Federal office in Virginia in 1885 the people outside of Virginia were surprised to learn that he was still alive. He was resurrected from obscurity by Grover Cleveland, who was not yet born when Hunter was Speaker and a Presidential aspirant already in the Democratic party.

Another pathetic career was that of John White, of Kentucky, the Speaker of the Twenty-seventh Congress. White retired from the Speakership in 1843, and two years later, while a circuit judge in Kentucky, he committed suicide, being the only one of the Speakers to end his own life.

In the Twenty-eighth Congress, the Speakership went to Virginia again. John W. Jones was elected. He was soon forgotten. At his old estate now, near Drewry's Bluff, in Virginia, in the garret of the little brick office his books lie in confused heaps, worm eaten and yellow with neglect and age.

John W. Davis, of Indiana was the Speaker of the Twenty-ninth Congress. This was the first time the Speakership had gone so far West.

The Thirtieth Congress was presided over by Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, the oldest ex-Speaker now living. Winthrop was a pupil of Daniel Webster, and served a part of one of Webster's terms in the Senate. But for forty years he has been for the most part out of politics. While in political life he was a Whig, and became a republican at the birth of that party. In late years Mr. Winthrop has been active in educational and benevolent movements, and his whole life has been one of great honor and credit.

Howell Cobb, of Georgia, was Speaker of the Thirty-first Congress, 1849-1851. The office went further South in this election. Before entering Congress Cobb had been Governor of Georgia, was Buchanan's Secretary of the Treasury, and afterward a General of the Confederate army.

The Thirty-second and Thirty-third Congresses had Linn Boyd, of Kentucky, for speaker.

With the assembling of the Thirty-fourth Congress the first great protracted battle for the Speakership began. In this Congress several parties and factions of parties contended for supremacy. There were pro-slavery Whigs and anti-slavery men. Besides these were the Free Soilers and Know Nothings. The struggle between these conflicting elements raged in a most lively way from Dec. 3, 1855, to Feb. 2, 1856. The election of N. P. Banks was brought about by the union of nearly

all the anti-slavery men, all the Free Soilers and most of the Know Nothings. The union of these elements was the first really practical and formidable shape taken on by the Republican party. Banks had been Governor of Massachusetts and served later as a General in the Union army. In this contest over the Speakership—a contest in which the issue was slavery—the successful candidate was from Massachusetts, while the defeated candidate was from South Carolina, being William Aiken of that State.

In the Thirty-fifth Congress the Speakership came again to the Democrats. James L. Orr, of South Carolina, was chosen Speaker, the only full term ever held by that State. Orr was Governor of South Carolina just after the war.

There was again a sharp struggle for the Speakership in the Thirty-sixth Congress, 1859-1861. The Republicans controlled this Congress, and attempted to elect John Sherman Speaker. After two months they succeeded in electing Wm. Pennington, of New Jersey. With Pennington began a line of Republican Speakers, which continued unbroken until 1875.

When President Lincoln was inaugurated in 1861 he called the Thirty-seventh Congress together in special session on July 4, 1861. Galusha A. Grow, of Pennsylvania, was elected Speaker, and he is alive at the age of 68.

Schuyler Colfax, of Indiana, was Speaker of the Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Congresses, retiring from that office in 1869 to become Vice President with Grant.

With the Forty-first Congress, which assembled in December, 1869, we come to one of the most famous Speakers in James G. Blaine. He was Speaker six years and was succeeded in the Forty-fourth Congress by Michael C. Kerr, of Indiana.

Mr. Kerr was the first Democratic Speaker to be elected after the war. Kerr died before the end of his first year in the chair "Sunset" Cox was chosen Speaker pro tem, and served until the National Democratic Convention which nominated Tilden met in St. Louis in 1876. At that time Cox was retired at the pre-emptory order of Boss Kelly, the Tammany chief, and Milton Taylor presided to the end of the session.

Samuel J. Randall was chosen at the assembling of the second session of the Forty-fourth Congress and was re-elected in the two Congresses following. Mr. Randall died in April, 1890.

When Garfield was elected in 1880 the House of Representatives again came into the hands of the Republicans. J. Warren Keifer, of Ohio was chosen Speaker of the Forty-seventh Congress. He is the least illustrious of the Republican line.

John G. Carlisle, of Kentucky presided over the Forty-eighth, Forty-ninth and Fiftieth Congresses. He was transferred to the Senate on the death of J. B. Beck, and by a coincidence based upon this unexpected transfer he voted on the Tariff bill the same year in both houses, leading the opposition in each house.

The Fifty-first Congress, which expired March 4, was presided over by Thomas B. Reed, of Maine, in one of the stormiest sessions ever held in the House of Representatives. This Congress contained three ex-Speakers, Banks, Randall and Carlisle. The present Congress has as a member only one ex-Speaker, Thomas B. Reed.

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